

The TechShare Technology Sharing Platform

April 27, 2011

Executive Summary

Objective

The Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) has made significant technological investments in marketing the State of Maine online, and in establishing an award winning online presence. This is in response to an increasing reliance by travelers on destination marketing websites for inspiring, researching and planning their trips. In an effort to help grow tourism throughout the State, the MOT has committed to sharing appropriate technologies at a regional level to help enhance each region's online presence, and to simplify the administrative burden of managing regional tourism data. Thus was conceived the TechShare Technology Sharing program.

Goals

The goal of the TechShare program is to leverage the core technologies behind the VisitMaine.com website, and make them available to eligible Regional Tourism Organizations. This provides an online feature-set not otherwise available to the regions, given their limit budgets.

Solution

The TechShare platform offers regions a rich set of features that make for a more comprehensive web presence, while at the same time shifts much of the burden for maintenance to area businesses and organizations, by allowing them to manage their own content. Key benefits of the TechShare platform are:

- **Deep and comprehensive.** The TechShare platform allows for comprehensive business and event listings management, extensive control over content, interactive mapping features and an integrated Trip Planner. In short, all of the features that users have come to expect from a top quality destination marketing website.
- **User managed.** The majority of content on the site (business and event listings, special packages) is managed by the users themselves, allowing them to submit and maintain their listings, as well as access comprehensive reporting on their listing's popularity. Site visitors even have the opportunity to submit content, with an available "Vacation Memories" section.
- **Region controlled.** Placing the emphasis on users for submitting content, allows region staff to play the role of content-approvers rather than content-creators. The TechShare platform includes a comprehensive administration interface, allowing for easy review, approval and publishing of submitted content.
- **Accurate Data.** By sharing data across Regions, and between Regions and the MOT, submissions are thoroughly vetted, ensuring accurate, up-to-date information for potential visitors.

Key Features

Introduction

Following is an overview of the current core feature-set available with the TechShare platform, which in themselves represent tremendous value for any destination marketing organizations. However, one of the most important aspects of the TechShare platform is that it is constantly under development, thanks to the Maine Office of Tourism's ongoing commitment to remaining at the forefront of online destination marketing. This means that the TechShare platform is continually evolving, with new features and additional modules in development. The future roadmap for the TechShare platform is discussed later in this proposal, to provide some insight into future features under development.

Design

It is important to stress that the TechShare platform is essentially the engine behind such sites as VisitMaine.com, downeastacadia.com, westernmaine.org and visitaroostook.com, and in order to remain flexible enough to do this, there is a clean separation between site design and business logic. This means that almost any design can be layered over the top of the TechShare platform, to provide a unique look and feel, while still retaining a full feature set. While Portland Webworks provides design services to the MOT and other regions, it is not a requirement for adoption of TechShare. Thus, if a region has an existing relationship with an agency that is already providing creative services for other media, then that agency can still work on the website design, and Portland Webworks need only turn it into the html and css necessary to wrap it around the TechShare platform.

Core Features

Business Listings

At the heart of any regional or state level tourism organization's role is to ensure that the area's tourism related business and organizations have an adequate opportunity to promote themselves and attract visitors. At the outset this was one of the primary objectives for the TechShare platform, and as a result it provides businesses with the the ability to create comprehensive listings designed to attract visitors.

The following graphic illustrates a typical business listing from a regional site, and includes all of the primary features available to any area business. Here's a breakdown of each of these in turn:

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the website for 'Yellow House On Clark's Hill Bed, Breakfast, & Catering Company'. The browser's address bar shows the URL: http://www.visitarooostook.com/organization/2140/yellow_house_on_clarks_hill_bed_breakfast_catering_compa. The website features a navigation bar with links: SEASONS | WHERE TO VISIT | WHERE TO STAY | WHERE TO EAT | THINGS TO DO | PLAN YOUR TRIP | TRAVEL PACKAGES | EVENTS | HOME. The main header includes the 'ARCOSTOOK THE CROWN OF MAINE' logo and a large image of a field. Below the header, there are several sections: a 'SEARCH' box, 'QUICK LINKS' (Sign Up for Email, Get a Postcard, My Trip Planner, Aroostook Getaways, Share Your Aroostook Memories), a 'DOWNLOAD' button, and a 'Description' section. The 'Description' section contains text about the property and a link to the website. Below the description is an 'Accommodation Type' section, followed by 'Things To Do' and 'Affiliations'. At the bottom, there is a 'Find nearby Events and Businesses' section with a search form. Annotations with arrows point to various elements: 'Add to my Trip Planner' (Customizable itinerary tool), 'Contact this Business' (Trackable contact form), 'Map this Location' (Automatic mapping based on long/lat or street address), 'Driving Directions' (Turn-by-turn assistance), 'External Link' (www.yellowhousebedandbreakfast.com/), and 'Find nearby Events and Businesses' (links to other things to do in the area).

Add to my Trip Planner

Allows users to add the location to their own “shopping basket” of businesses and events, which they can save and come back to at a later date (see below for more details).

Contact this Business

Provides a contact form for users to send a message directly to the business. This represents a key “conversion point” within the site, being a measurable way to track a region’s success in driving site visitors through the sales funnel to the point where they are willing to take action and make contact. Given its importance, this form is trackable by both businesses and the region, so both can see the value of the site and other marketing designed to drive traffic to the business.

Map this Location

Provides a detailed map view of the business location, with full pan and zoom capabilities.

Driving Directions

Provides written, turn-by-turn directions based on users starting address.

External Link

Provides an external link back to the business' own website (if available).

Description Fields

The TechShare business listing provides multiple fields in which to describe and categorize the business' features and amenities. In addition to the general description field, TechShare uses many pre-defined categories for business type, and business amenities to help categorize listings and provide multiple search criteria.

Find nearby Events and Businesses

To help site visitors build an itinerary of things to do in a given area, each listing includes area search functionality. This allows site visitors to select "Events", "Things to Do", "Where to Stay" and "Where to Eat" within a pre-defined radius of the business they are viewing.

Special Packages

As an adjunct to Business Listings, businesses and organizations are also able to augment their listings by posting time-specific packages and deals, such as "weekend getaways" or "holiday specials".

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a business listing for "Two Day, Muskie Fishing Camping Trip" on the TechShare platform. The listing is for "Aroostook County" and includes a search bar, quick links, and a detailed description. Annotations point to various features:

- Date Range:** Points to the "Dates" section showing "May 5th, 2009 - October 31st, 2011".
- Price:** Points to the "Price" section showing "Prices start at \$625.00".
- Links to full Business Listings and external site:** Points to the "Organization Information" section, which includes the name "Dave Kelso, Linda Engelhardt Master Maine Guides", phone number "(207) 680-5543", and website "www.davidkelso.com".
- Description Fields:** Points to the "Description" section, which details the trip itinerary, costs, and restrictions.
- "Add to my Trip Planner":** Points to the "Add to my Trip Planner" button.
- "Contact this Business" Trackable contact:** Points to the "Contact this Business" button.
- "Email this Page":** Points to the "Email this page" button.
- Downloadable reservation certificate:** Points to the "DOWNLOAD RESERVATION CERTIFICATE" button, which includes a note: "Reservation certificate must be presented to business to qualify for Getaway."

In addition to some familiar features from the Business Listing, such as “Add to my Trip Planner”, and “Contact this Business” a Special Package listing offers some additional functionality.

Date

Allows businesses to apply a specific date range for the offer, which is particularly helpful for travelers planning their trip for a specific time period, since Packages are searchable by date range.

Price

Given that price is another searchable category, including a price allows users to find Packages that fit within their budget.

Email this Page

When planning a group trip it can be helpful to share Package information with others. The “Email this Page” functionality allows users to share a link with multiple people through a simple form submission.

Downloadable Reservation Certificate

In order to help businesses track the success of their Special Packages they are able to create a Reservation Certificate that they can make a requirement for reservation. The certificate is system generated, based on fields completed by the business when setting up the Package. Redemption of the coupon provides businesses with first hand evidence of their Package’s success.

Event Listings

Similar to Business Listings and Special Package listings, Event Listings provide businesses and organizations with a way to promote time sensitive events, such as concerts, grand openings parades or any other type of event a business might want to promote.

The look and navigation elements are very similar to other types of listings, with familiar “Add to my Trip Planner”, “Contact this Business”, “Map this Location” and “Driving Directions” links available. In addition to the standard Description field, an Event Listing also provides specific fields for Date, Time, Location, Fees and Contact Information to create a comprehensive listing. All of these fields are searchable, allowing site visitors to find events that match their own timeframe.

Holiday Light Parade

[Add to my Trip Planner](#)
[Contact this Business](#)
[Map this Location](#)
[Driving Directions](#)

Description

The First Saturday of December Presque Isle celebrates the Christmas season with a variety of activities ending with the Annual Holiday Light parade. the parade starts at North Street and proceeds south on Main Street ending at University of Maine in Presqu Isle campus where warm refreshments are served.

Venue

Venue Name: **Main Street**
Address: North Street
Presque Isle, ME 04769

Date

December 5th, 2009

Times

7 p.m.

Contact Information

Website: www.pichamber.com/
Name: Theresa Fowler
Phone: (207) 764-6561

Categories:

Great for Children

Find nearby Events and Businesses

Find: (All)
Within: 20 Miles
Go »

Listing Administration Screens

The process for creating listings has been designed to be as simple as possible, and follows a largely similar process for Business Listings and Event Listings. By following a simple 5-step process, Businesses are able to create a comprehensive listing that offers extensive opportunity to highlight key features and amenities, and allows them to select all of the relevant search criteria.

Home > Tourism Partners > Manage Listings > Add a New Organization

Add a New Organization

STEP 1 GENERAL INFORMATION STEP 2 ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS STEP 3 BUSINESS DETAILS STEP 4 MAP LOCATION STEP 5 CONFIRM

General Information

Organization Name:

Description:

750 Characters Remaining

Public Information

Contact Name:

E-Mail:

Phone Number:

What type of business is this? At least one is required.

- ☒ Accommodation
- ☒ Attraction
- ☒ Restaurant
- ☒ Visitor Resource

Accommodations/Amenities Attractions/Activities Restaurant Visitor Resources

Business Details

AAA Rating:

- ☐ This business is seasonal.
- ☐ This business is handicap accessible.
- ☐ This business has French-speaking staff.
- ☐ This business is a participant in the [Maine Green Business Certification Program](#).

Affiliations

Please select any organizations with which your business is affiliated.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Chamber of Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Antiques Dealers Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine As
<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Bow Hunters Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Ca
<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Farm Bureau Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maine Golf Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine In
<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Merchants Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Professional Guides Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Re
<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Snowmobile Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Sporting Camps Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Maine To
<input type="checkbox"/> Maine Windjammer Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Ski Maine Association	

Group Tour

If your business actively works with motorcoach groups, please select the type of product group (check all that apply).

- ☐ Accommodation
- ☐ Attraction
- ☐ Motorcoach

Map

stage.visitmaine.com allows users to view maps of organizations, and generate driving directions to them. Below, the position of your organization is shown on the map.

You supplied a physical address on step 1: below, it has been geocoded (automatically located on a map). Please **verify** that the address below and geocoding are correct. If not, you may use the map to adjust the position of your organization.

5 Milk Street, 2nd Floor
Portland, ME 04101

☐ Accept the map below

If you do not accept the map, users will not be able to view maps of your organization or generate driving directions to it.

MAPQUEST

Back Cove Franklin Arterial Munjoy Hill East End Eastern Prom Casco Bay Casco Bay Ferry Fore River

Deering Oaks Park Ave Grant St Sherman St Avon Pl Deering St Congress St Middle St Commercial St Union Wharf

0 300m 900ft

REGIONAL CITY STREET ZOOM LEVELS

"Add a New Organization" Sample Screens

Similarly the process of creating Event Listings is an even simpler 4-step process, with much of the business information already pre-filled. Within minutes a business is able to complete a Listing and submit them for approval at the Regional and/or State level.



Four simple steps to create Event Listings

Finally, creating new Getaway or Packages is simplest of all, with one simple screen (illustrated below) collecting all of the necessary information to add this type of listing. To save time with regularly occurring offers, existing Packages or Getaways can be duplicated, and with a few changes updated to create new Listings.

The screenshot shows the 'Add a New Package' form with the following sections and annotations:

- General Information:**
 - Organization: Lindas' Lakeside Cottage Rentals
 - Getaway Title: (75 Characters Remaining)
- Date Range:**
 - Enter the date range during which this Getaway is available. It will appear in search result listings as soon as it is approved, even if it is not yet in effect. If you have blackout dates, clearly identify them in the **Restrictions** field below.
 - Begin Date: Month, Day, Year (with calendar icon)
 - End Date: Month, Day, Year (with calendar icon)
- Getaway Details:**
 - Low - End Price: \$0.00 (Searchable "Price starting at" field)
 - Enter the low end price ("prices start at...") for this Getaway.
 - ☐ Getaway Pays Commission (Check this box if you agree to pay a 10% travel agent booking commission on this Getaway.)
 - Description: (1500 Characters Remaining)
 - Restrictions: (450 Characters Remaining)
 - Please include any specific restrictions that relate to your Getaway offering, such as occupancy restrictions, taxes, included gratuities, black-out dates, etc.
 - Categories:
 - ☐ Arts & Culture
 - ☐ Culinary
 - ☐ Entertainment
 - ☐ Environmentally Friendly
 - ☐ Escorted Trips
 - ☐ Fall Foliage

Annotations with arrows point to the following fields:

- Date Range through which Package is active (points to the Date Range section)
- Package Description and Restrictions (points to the Description and Restrictions fields)
- Searchable "Price starting at" field (points to the Low - End Price field)
- Searchable category selection (points to the Categories section)

Integrated Search

As previously mentioned, Business Listings, Special Packages and Event Listings all include multiple search criteria, allowing for very granular searches. Each of the major “Where To Stay”, “Where To Eat”, “Things To Do” and “Travel Packages” sections contain detailed search tools, with relevant search categories and ranges to select in addition to the standard keyword search.

Site-wide search is also included, integrating static copy results with listing-based results, and presenting them in an easy to interpret format, with additional filters to help refine results even further.

Search results, by type: “Businesses”, “Getaways” (Special Pages), “Pages” (Static Content)

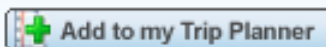
Additional Search filters, based on other “Things To Do” categories

Location based search filters

The screenshot displays the TechShare search interface. On the left, there is a 'SEARCH' section with a 'Keywords' input field and a 'GO' button. Below this is a 'REFINE SEARCH' section with a list of categories and their respective counts: Fishing (Fresh Water) [16], Sporting Camp [16], House & Condo & Cottage Rental [16], Hunting [14], Canoeing & Kayaking (Fresh Water) [14], Snowmobiling in Maine [12], Registered Maine Guide [12], Housekeeping Cottages [11], Other Outdoor Activity [9], and Wildlife Viewing (Guided) [9]. A 'show more filters >' link is also present. Below the refine search section is a 'FILTER BY REGION' section with a list of regions and their counts: St. John Valley [15], Central Aroostook [10], Western Aroostook [7], and Southern Aroostook [6]. At the bottom of the left sidebar are 'NEW SEARCH' and 'QUICK LINKS' sections. The main content area is titled 'Business Results' and shows 'Businesses 1 - 20 of 41 containing "fishing"'. It includes tabs for 'Businesses (41)', 'Getaways (4)', and 'Pages (25)'. The results are displayed in a list format, with each item showing a green plus icon, the business name, location, and a brief description. A 'Trip Planner' button is visible at the bottom of the list.

Trip Planner

A key benefit to the listing-based structure of much of a TechShare site's content is the ability to save selected listings to a Trip Planner, and thereby create an itinerary for a planned trip. While browsing through listings, users can simply click the “Add to my Trip Planner” button to save the listing.



If a user wants to save, print or email their itinerary, they can easily create a User Profile that allows them to revisit their Trip Planner at a future date. These User Profiles also represent valuable consumer data to the region for use in future marketing efforts.

My Trip Calendar

Name:

save print email Arrival Date:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashland Logging Museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bouchard's Portage Lakeside Cabins Mars Hill Country Club 	(Empty)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waters Edge 	(Empty)

Day 4:

My Trip Planner Items

Organizations

<input type="button" value="ADD"/>	Ashland Logging Museum	<input type="button" value="DETAILS"/>
<input type="button" value="ADD"/>	Bouchard's Portage Lakeside Cabins	<input type="button" value="DETAILS"/>
<input type="button" value="ADD"/>	Mars Hill Country Club	<input type="button" value="DETAILS"/>
<input type="button" value="ADD"/>	Waters Edge	<input type="button" value="DETAILS"/>

Saved Listings added to a Trip Calendar to help with trip planning.

Saved Listings with the Trip Planner

My Trip Planner

Use your trip planner to keep track of places, events and other things that interest you. To begin planning a visit to Maine, create a [new calendar](#).

print email

My Calendars

[My Calendar](#)

All Trip Planner Items

Ashland Logging Museum	<input type="button" value="VIEW MAP"/>	<input type="button" value="REMOVE"/>
Bouchard's Portage Lakeside Cabins	<input type="button" value="VIEW MAP"/>	<input type="button" value="REMOVE"/>
Mars Hill Country Club	<input type="button" value="VIEW MAP"/>	<input type="button" value="REMOVE"/>
Waters Edge		<input type="button" value="REMOVE"/>

User Submitted Content

A key factor in lending authenticity to a site is content submitted directly by site visitors, rather than marketing copy. That's why each TechShare site allows visitors to upload stories and photos of their own visit to the region. Each site includes a submission form that captures the submitter's information, along with their vacation story and up to three accompanying photographs.

These submission are then stored in a secure administration area for approval and editing before publishing. Using such a tool helps to create a rich archive of user submitted content that helps build credibility for any destination marketing site.

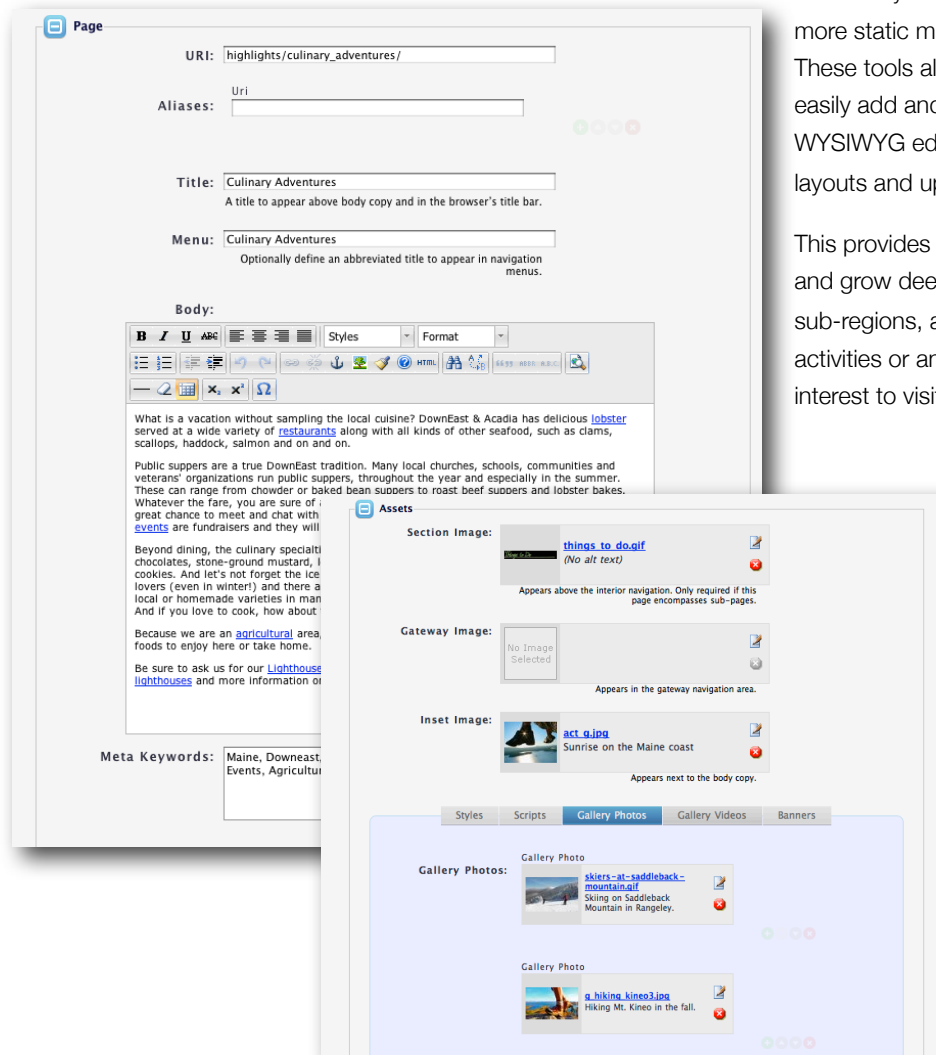
Content Management

In addition to all the tools available for regional organizations and businesses to generate content, the TechShare platform

offers easy content management tools for more static marketing sections of the site. These tools allow non-technical users to easily add and maintain copy, using a simple WYSIWYG editor, as well as adjust page layouts and upload images.

This provides regions with the ability to build and grow deep content sections to describe sub-regions, area attractions, seasonal activities or any other special areas of interest to visitors.

Given the ease with which new pages can be added, and sections can be expanded, this adds to the site's organic nature, which not only keeps visitors coming back but also helps to significantly increase the site's visibility to search engines.



Featured Stories

As part of these content management tools, the TechShare platform offers the ability to highlight "Featured Stories", such as professionally written pieces. These can be linked directly from the homepage to guide visitors directly to some of the best quality content.

Granular Administrative Control

Managing the amount of content that TechShare driven sites are able to generate and publish could become a cumbersome task without appropriate administrative tools. However, as was mentioned earlier, the goal of the TechShare platform is to place region staff in an approval role, rather than a content creation and publishing role. This means that the administrative interface was designed to allow region staff to review, approve and publish submitted content with a few mouse clicks, rather than dealing with cumbersome tasks such as uploading or transcribing email submissions.

All submitted Listings, Events, Packages or User Submitted Stories are held in an approval queue before publishing. Region staff simply have to log in to their administrative area and review these submissions before approving them for publishing. If any minor edits are necessary, they can be easily made before approval, or, if the submission requires

major revisions, it can be rejected, and the business will be notified of the required changes.

Since the TechShare platform also underpins VisitMaine.com, appropriate submissions made at the State level are also shared at the regional level, and vice

Administration » Events

Logged in as Developer Account
Actions: [Dropdown]

Active Filter: Showing events with which are pending.

3 results found

Visibility	Set Status	ID	Created	Begin	Name
V F M D A	[review]	4714	May 18th 09, 10 AM	Aug. 29, 2009	Maine Native American Summer Market & Demonstration
V F M D A	[review]	4330	Mar 17th 09, 9 AM	Apr. 04, 2009	Presque Isle's Sesquicentennial Birthday Bash
V F M D A	[review]	4217	Feb 17th 09, 3 PM	Feb. 17, 2009	MID Sommers Festival

versa. State and regional administrators can then make their own choices on publishing, and a listing's visibility across the TechShare network is clearly shown in the admin interface.

User submitted stories and photographs are handled in a very similar way, although all submissions are managed at the regional level. With one click submissions can be published to the Vacation Memories section.

Business Listings can easily be exported in a spreadsheet format through the admin interface, allowing for easy creation of mailing lists for direct marketing efforts.

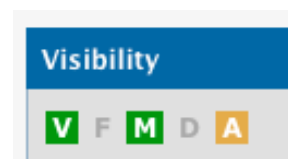
Finally, the Admin Tools allow for multiple administrator accounts, so the task of reviewing and approving listings can be share amongst multiple staff.

Administration

Public Listings

Manage publicly submitted resource listings, and public user accounts.

- [Organizations](#) · [[Approval Queue \(176\)](#)] · [[Pending Delete](#)]
Manage organization listings.
- [Events](#) · [[Approval Queue \(3\)](#)]
Manage event listings.
- [Getaways](#)
Manage different types of Getaway listings.
 - [Packages](#) · [[Approval Queue \(88\)](#)]
Manage package listings.
 - [Specials](#) · [[Approval Queue \(0\)](#)]
Manage Specials listings.
 - [FreeStayMaine](#) · [[Approval Queue \(1\)](#)]
Manage FreeStayMaine listings.
- [Aroostook County Memories](#) (0)
Manage testimonial form submissions.
- [User Accounts](#)
Manage public user accounts.
- [Email Subscriptions](#)
Manage mailing list subscriptions.



The above example shows a listing that has an active status on visitmaine.com and westernmaine.org, while it is still waiting approval on visitaroostook.com

User Admin Tools

Not only do regional administrators have powerful content tools at their disposal, but so do the business users of the site, so they can fully leverage the value of the TechShare platform.

The screenshot shows the 'Manage Listings' page for a user named Tracy Hillman. The page is divided into several sections:

- Help Documents:** A list of links for documentation, including 'How to Add an Organization', 'How to Add Maine Getaways', 'The FreeStayMaine Program', 'How to Update an Organization', 'How to Add an Event', and 'The Technology Sharing Program'. An annotation 'Help Documentation' points to this section.
- My Account:** A sidebar box containing the user's name, email, phone number, and a link to 'Update Account Information'. An annotation 'Manage business contact details' points to this box.
- My Organizations:** A section showing a list of organizations, currently displaying 'Hampton Inn Freeport'. It includes links for 'Details', 'Update', and 'Delete'. An annotation 'Analyze Results' points to the 'Details' link.
- Getaways (Packages & Specials):** A section showing a list of packages, currently displaying 'Home For The Holidays (11/1/09)'. It includes a link for 'Details'. An annotation 'Create and Manage Packages & Specials' points to the 'Add a New Getaway' link.
- My Events:** A section showing a message 'You don't have any events yet. Add an Event »'. An annotation 'Create and Manage Events' points to the 'Add a New Event' link.

At the bottom of the page, there is a 'SHARE' button and social media icons.

An example of the primary business users interface.

As illustrated above, the business user's interface provides simple tools for creating and managing listings. It also provides full documentation for users who may not be everyday users of a web interface. From this main interface, users are then able to drill down further to analyze the performance of individual packages, as illustrated below. Here users can see the number of views, and the number of coupon downloads, as well as the page's current status and visibility.

Home For The Holidays

Package Details

Name Home For The Holidays

Dates November 1st, 2009 – January 3rd, 2010

Type Package

Statistics

Coupon Downloads	Page Views
1944	11280

Status

Site	Visibility
www.visitmaine.com	●

[Update this Package](#)
[Delete this Package](#)

My Account

Tracy Hillman
PWMFP_Hampton@hilton.com
(207) 865-1400

[Update Account Information](#)

Help Documents

- [Add an Organization](#)
- [Update an Organization](#)
- [Add Maine Getaways Package](#)
- [Add an Event](#)
- [Technology Sharing Program](#)

Coupon Downloads and Page Views

Where is the package listed, and what is the visibility (Green = active, Yellow = inactive).

SHARE

Postcards

To help friends share their vacation plans or experiences, the TechShare platform provides site users the ability to send a virtual postcard to a friend, using selected photography from the region. By completing a simple form, users can email a friend with a link to their “postcard” that contains a personal message.

home > send a nmdc postcard

Send a Aroostook County Postcard

A grid of nine small images representing different Aroostook County scenes: a moose, a hot air balloon, a snowy landscape, a red wooden chair, pink flowers, a boat, a group of people, and a hot air balloon over a river.

Your Postcard

October 28th, 2009

We had a great time in Aroostook County!

A preview of the postcard showing the selected hot air balloon image over a river, with a date stamp and a message.

Capturing Demographic Data

Although the TechShare platform provides a wealth of online information, it also helps to facilitate other marketing efforts, by providing frequent opportunities to collect user information which can be then form the basis of future mail or email

campaigns. In addition to the Trip Planner signup, here are some of the other opportunities to capture user demographics.

Guidebook Ordering

For those who prefer to review information in a more analog format, the TechShare platform allows users to order their area guidebooks through the site. Also, if available in an electronic format, the guidebook can be made available for download through the site.

Email Signup

Users interested in receiving updates from a Region can sign up directly to their email marketing lists through a simple form.

This form also allows existing subscribed users to unsubscribe at any time, in compliance with spam regulations.

Request a Travel Planner

Thank you for your interest in Aroostook County.

Please complete the form below to request a printed version of our brochure. Be sure to indicate which sub-regions and activities interest you. Please allow approximately 2-3 weeks for delivery.

You may also view an [electronic version of our brochure](#).

For additional Aroostook County travel information, please call 1-888-216-2463.

STEP 1

GENERAL INFORMATION

STEP 2

CONFIRM

Contact Information

First Name:

Last Name:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City:

Country:

Province/State:

Postal Code:

Email:

Phone:

Fax:

Preferences

Please indicate which aspects of Aroostook County interest you.

Regions: ☐ Central Aroostook ☐ Southern Aroostook ☐ St. John Valley ☐ Western Aroostook

Group Tours

In addition to the various search tools that TechShare offers for the core activity areas (“Where To Stay”, “Where To Eat”, “Things To Do”, “Travel Packages”), the platform also supports services for Group Tour Operators, which include custom search tools for Group Tour friendly business, and specific Group Tour listing information only visible to those using the Group Tour search tools.

Group Tour Information

Attraction

Max Group Size: 250

Has Group Rates: Yes

Min Number Of Visitors For Group: 15

Rates: More than 1 hr 30 min

Duration: Yes

Has Public Restrooms: No

Has Gift Shop: 2 1/2 hour trip through hand operated

Description: Songo Locks. 1 hour trip up Long Lake. Charter available for weddings, family outings, etc.

Opening Time: 10:00:00

Closing Time: 20:00:00

Compensation: Driver and Escort

Motor Coach Parking: Yes

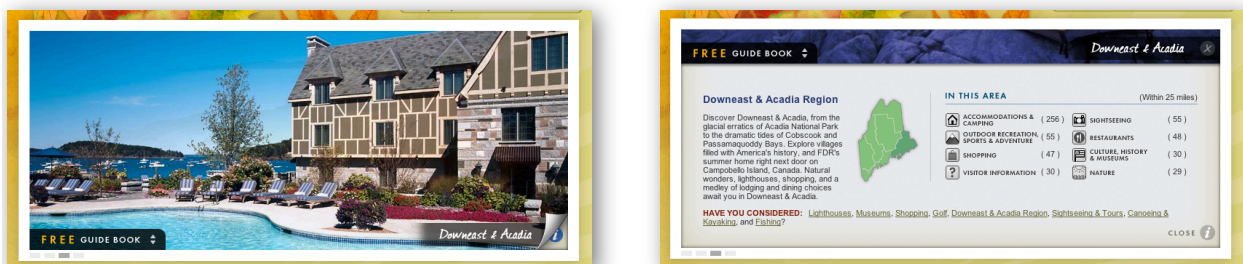
Free Hosting

In addition to the all of the core features of the TechShare Platform, it is supported by a robust and fully secure hosting environment. This environment has been developed specifically by Portland Webworks to be able to handle the large amounts of data that the Platform supports, as well as the high volume of visits and information requests that it generates.

The cost of this hosting is included with the TechShare platform, to ensure that it is able to operate at optimal capacity.

Enhanced Banners

One of the most striking features of VisitMaine.com are the large interactive banners that dominate each of the major content areas. Using Javascript, each combine striking rotating imagery, with a “window blind” feature that reveals additional regional or section information.



The graphic above illustrates the “before” and “after” state of the Enhanced Banner, in which imagery gives way to a listing summary for the area (with direct links) as well links to other primary activities.

Sticky Footer

To increase the interactivity of the sites in the VisitMaine.com family Portland Webworks has recently introduced a “sticky footer” that provide users easy access to the most popular sections of the site, as well as offering an array of social media features tools to discover and share additional content.



Rich Media

One of the most effective tools for extending the length of time that visitors spend on the site is the use of video, expanded quality photography and interactive elements such as maps. Portland Webworks has extensive experience developing these features for VisitMaine.com, and could easily adapt them for use at the regional level.

Video Galleries

While the core TechShare platform allows the embedding of video from other video hosting services (such as YouTube), a better solution is dedicated hosting and the use of a non-branded video player that more seamlessly integrates within the site layout. This provides more responsive and consistent video delivery. To see how video is handle on VisitMaine.com, please visit: <http://www.visitmaine.com/rich-media/videos/>

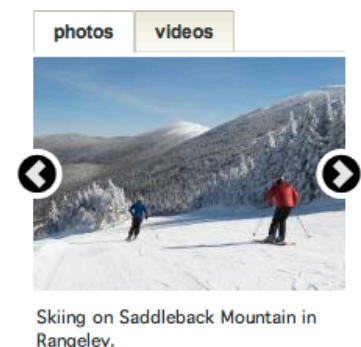
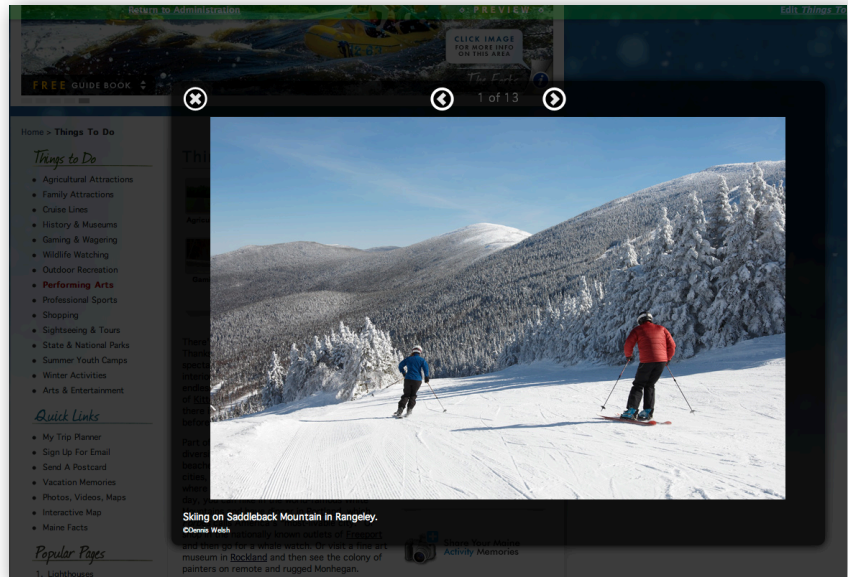


Photo Galleries

Again, the core TechShare platform allows for the upload and inclusion of photographs within articles, it does not easily handle large groups of photographs, and does not always provide sufficient room for displaying high quality images. The solution for this is to add photo galleries that can display a large number of shots through an external viewer that does not require an entire page refresh for each new image.

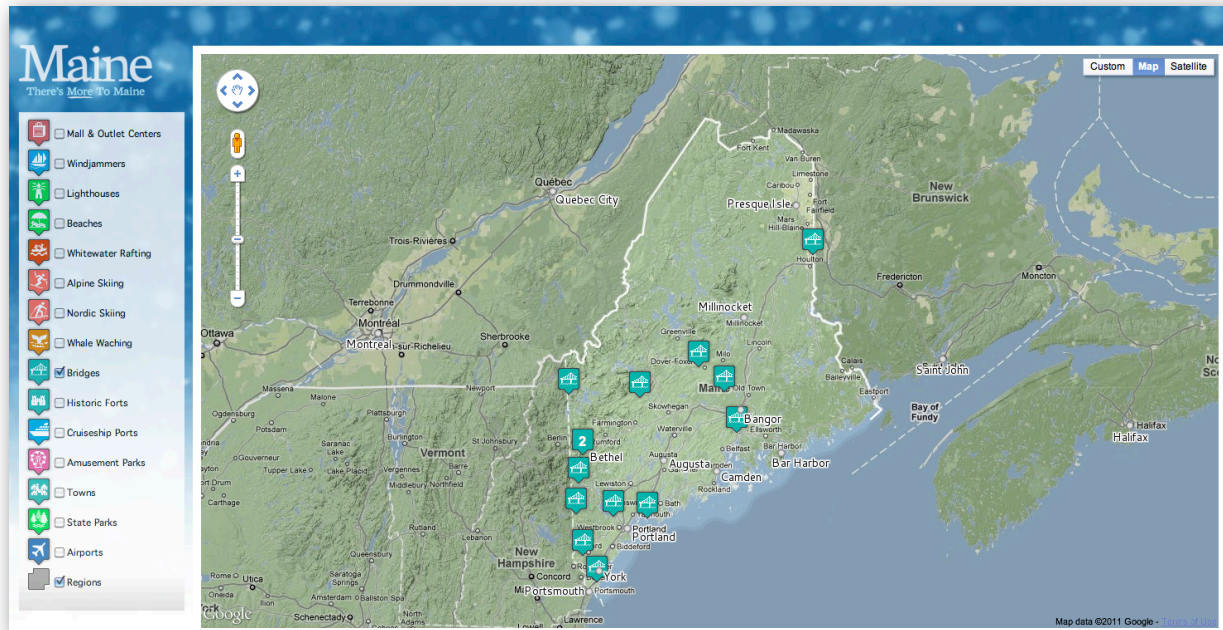
The photo galleries on VisitMaine.com use a “lightbox” effect to render images over the top of the page, and include embedded navigation elements to move from image to image without returning to the page. For more examples, please visit: <http://www.visitmaine.com/rich-media/photos/>



Maps

Maps are one of the highest traffic areas of VisitMaine.com, and through enhanced interactive maps they have developed even greater value to users, over and above their obvious benefit in helping visitors find their way around.

Effective interactive maps can now be offered to TechShare partners to highlight popular features or activities, and tie directly with business or organization listings to help visitors find more detailed information. Popular topics such as golf, skiing and lighthouses can all be isolated and displayed exclusively through the new interactive map.



An example of VisitMaine.com's new interactive map, featuring configurable "layers" that can be turned on and off to highlight different areas of interest.

In-Page Pop Up Browsing

As an example of the continual enhancements being made to VisitMaine.com and the TechShare platform, in-page pop-up browsing was recently introduced. This allows visitors to quickly view listings within a category without having to leave their current page. This not only serves to illustrate the depth of content available on the site, but also represents a user-centered design approach, focus on getting information to site visitors as easily as possible.



Search Intercepts

If a region has certain common search terms, it can be valuable to augment those search results by not only linking to relevant business, event and package listings, but also directly to featured content to make sure visitors are aware of the full scope of content available. This functionality is already in place on VisitMaine.com, where search terms such as "golf", "whales", "cuisine" and "lighthouses" all have custom headers with embedded video to highlight the deeper content available.



An example of a search intercept inserting customized header information above business results based on the search term “whales”.

Images Within Business Listings

By default businesses and organizations do not have the ability to add photographs as part of their listings or packages. This decision was initially taken at the State level, since the quality of submitted photography can vary tremendously, which makes it difficult to present a consistent quality of listing. However, if desired, a region could allow this functionality at a local level, providing businesses with the opportunity to create even richer listings.

Platform Roadmap

Overview

One of the greatest strengths of the TechShare platform is that it is under constant development, thanks to the continued investment of the Maine Office of Tourism. So, rather than a static feature set, users can benefit from an expanding list of features that keep pace with the growing demands of destination marketing organizations.

Following is a list of some of the features currently on the roadmap for future TechShare enhancements that will either become core features, or additional modules for the platform.

Customer Relationship Management System

In order to help the MOT and regions engage in more targeted outbound marketing efforts, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System has been conceived to help build a profile on visitors interacting with VisitMaine.com. Specifically this involves the tracking and reporting of key touch-points with the site, such as guide book requests, "Trip Planner" sign ups, and email sign ups. Ultimately this information will be combined with off-line activities, such as trade show attendance, call center interaction or returned response cards.

By creating such a holistic profile of potential visitors, future marketing efforts can be targeted more directly based on communication preferences and areas of interest, maximizing the impact of marketing dollars and increasing potential visitor conversion.

While currently the CRM initiative is focussed on MOT efforts, much of the functionality can be extended to benefit regions and provide more detailed consumer information.

Trip Planner Enhancements

As popular as the existing Trip Planner is, there are various enhancements planned that are designed to make it even easier to use and more functional. Such enhancements would include:

- Removing immediate registration requirements
- The ability to add various types of content to the Planner, including images, video, articles and getaways
- Adding notes to a Trip Planner itinerary
- Publish your Trip Planner (see Itineraries)

- Public profiles

Business Detail Page Enhancements

Continually expanding the amount and quality of information provided on Business Detail Listings increases the value of the listing to both the business and the consumer. This in turn increases the likelihood of a listing visitor taking action to explore that business further (e.g. exiting to visit business' website) – thereby creating a valuable lead conversion. To this end there are a number of feature enhancements currently being planned for Business Listings:

- Share with a friend
- Map with “What’s Nearby” overlay
- Expanded “What’s Nearby” content
 - Lodging
 - Dining
 - Attractions
 - Events
 - Specials
 - Packages
- Expanded photo gallery

Events Enhancements

In order to make upcoming events easier to filter through the TechShare platform will provide various formats in which to view listing. In addition to the traditional list view, site visitors will also be available to view in either a weekly or monthly a calendar format.

Itineraries

The “Itineraries” feature would provide site visitors the ability to submit their own user-generated Trip Itineraries to share with other potential visitors to Maine. Once submitted, site visitors could vote submitted Itineraries up or down, ensuring that the most helpful itineraries are given prominence. User submitted Itineraries will provide site visitors with ready made suggestions of multiple events and business combinations, providing an easy way to enjoy a more complete vacation in Maine.

Search Enhancements

Consumer expectations for site search behavior is continually changing, based on the sophisticated search functionality being provided by such sites as Google, Amazon and Wikipedia. Consumers expect search to be intuitive, employing

suggestive search to prompt potential queries based on the first few key strokes, or to anticipate common misspellings. These are all part of the roadmap for TechShare search enhancements, as well as logical search (using “and”, “or”, “not” in search queries to expand or refine results) and natural language search (e.g. “what can I do on July 4th?”).

Along with these front-end enhancements to search would come more powerful tools to analyze search queries to determine future marketing efforts. As an example, reports would be available for Most Popular Search or Trending Search Terms, to help guide content development to meet consumer demand.

Listing Administration Enhancements

While perhaps not the most glamorous area for enhancements, ensuring that administration tools keep pace with enhanced front-end features is of great value to region staff responsible for site maintenance. Enhancements would include checks for possible duplicate organizations when a new listing is being created. Duplicate listings often occur as a result of forgotten usernames, since businesses are unable to retrieve them, and subsequently create a new listing. Similarly, the ability to retrieve a username if forgotten, will greatly reduce the incidence of duplicate listings. The existence of duplicate listings creates the potential for conflicting information for end users, as well as unnecessarily long search results, while requests for forgotten password generate additional workload for site admin staff.

Page Rating

This feature involves adding functionality to selected pages so that end users may give the page a rating based on its usefulness, value etc. Pages can then be ranked or presented within search results based on their rating.

Clearly ranked pages help site users to easily filter search results for relevancy or popularity, making the search process easier and faster. Additionally, page ratings help to capture trending topics and events, so that they can quickly be presented as “must see” or “must do” attractions.